

# Injury Fact Sheet-Construction



## Plumbers—Hearing Loss From Noise

Plumbers filed nearly 300 claims for hearing loss from 2000 to 2004



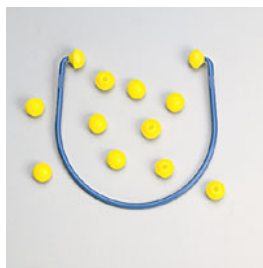
Hearing loss is one of the most frequently identified reasons for filing workers compensation claims for plumbers. Hearing loss injuries are costly and affect your industrial insurance premiums. They contribute to the reason for the base rate of \$1.88 per hour per employee paid by contractors employing plumbers in 2006. If your company has a higher than average number of injuries (claims), your “experience rating” could increase by as much as 25% in one year to \$2.35 per hour per employee.

Stated in another way, if you had 5 full-time plumbers and had an average number of injuries (claims), you would pay about \$19,552.00 in premiums in 2006. If your experience rating increased by 25% because you had higher than average injuries, you would pay about \$4,888 more or \$24,440 in premiums in 2006.

### Causes of hearing loss

Most construction worksites are loud and noisy. The noise levels are highly variable depending on the work. Plumbers often work with and around loud equipment such as power saws, drills, nail guns and hammers .

A University of Washington study showed that most plumbers do not wear hearing protection at work, or only used it part of the time, even when working around noisy equipment.



Some hearing protection options

### Ways to prevent hearing loss

The best way to prevent hearing loss is to eliminate or lower the exposure to equipment noise such as:

- ♦ Buying quieter models when purchasing new equipment
- ♦ Placing noisy equipment such as compressors and generators as far from the work zone as possible.

However, because plumbers are so mobile on construction sites, hearing protection is usually the most practical way to reduce their exposure to noise. As their employer you must ensure they:

- ♦ Use their hearing protection,
- ♦ Are provided annual hearing tests to identify hearing loss before it becomes severe,
- ♦ Are trained on the hazards of noise exposure.

Remember, hearing loss is permanent.

If your plumbers can't hear well, they can also be in danger on the job from other hazards.